SOME HINTS ON PATTERN-DESIGNING. BY WILLIAM MORRIS.

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Ulrich Middeldorf

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SOME HINTS ON PATTERN-DESIGNING. A LECTURE DELIVERED BY WILLIAM MORRIS AT THE WORKING MEN'S COLLEGE, LONDON, ON DECEMBER 10, 1881.

By the word pattern-design, of which I have undertaken to speak to you to-night, I mean the ornamentation of a surface by work that is not imitative or historical, at any rate, not principally or essentially so. Such work is often not literally flat, for it may be carving or moulded work in plaster or pottery; but whatever material relief it may have is given to it for the sake of beauty & richness, and not for the sake of imitation, or to tell a fact directly; so that people have called this art ornamental art, though indeed all real art is ornamental.

Now, before we go further, we may as well ask ourselves what reason or right this so-called ornamental art has to existence? We might answer the question shortly by saying that it seems clear that mankind has hitherto determined to have it even at the cost of a good deal of labour & trouble: an answer good enough to satisfy our consciences that we are not necessarily wasting our time in meeting here to consider it; but we may furthermore try to get at the reasons that have forced men in the mass always to expect to have what to some of them doubtless seems an absurd superfluity of life.

I do not know a better way of getting at these reasons than for each of us to suppose himself to be in the room in which he will have to pass a good part of his life, the said room being quite bare of ornament, & to be there that he may consider what he can do to make the bare walls pleasant & helpful to him; I say the walls, because, after all, the widest use of pattern-designing is the clothing of the walls of a room, hall, church, or what building you will. Doubtless there will be some, in these days at least, who will say, "'Tis most helpful to me to let the bare walls alone." So also there would be some who, when asked with what manner of books they will furnish their room, would answer, "With none." But I think you will agree with me in thinking that both these sets of people would be in an unhealthy state of mind, and probably of body also; in which case we need not trouble ourselves about their whims, since it is with healthy & sane people only that art has dealings.

Again, a healthy & sane person being asked with what kind of art he would clothe his walls, might well answer, "With the best art," and so end the question. Yet, out on it! so complex is human life, that even this seemingly most reasonable answer may turn out to be little better than an evasion.

For I suppose the best art to be the pictured representation of men's imaginings; what they have thought has happened to the world before their time, or what they deem they have seen with the

eyes of the body or the soul: and the imaginings thus represented are always beautiful indeed, but oftenest stirring to men's passions & aspirations, and not seldom sorrowful or even terrible.
Stories that tell of men's aspirations for more than material life can give them, their struggles for the future welfare of their race, their unselfish love, their unrequited service: things like this are the subjects for the best art; in such subjects there is hope surely, yet the aspect of them is likely to be sorrowful enough: defeat the seed of victory, and death, the seed of life, will be shown on the face of most of them.
Take note, too, that in the best art all these solemn and awful things are expressed clearly and without any vagueness, with such life and power that they impress the beholder so deeply that he is brought face to face with the very scenes, & lives among them for a time; so raising his life above the daily tangle of small things that wearies him, to the level of the heroism which they represent.
This is the best art; and who can deny that it is good for us all that it should be at hand to stir our emotions: yet its very greatness makes it a thing to be handled carefully, for we cannot always be having our emotions deeply stirred: that wearies us body and soul; and man, an animal that longs for rest like other animals, defends himself against the weariness by hardening his heart, & refusing to be moved every hour of the day by tragic emo-

tions; nay, even by beauty that claims his attention over-much.

Such callousness is bad, both for the arts and our own selves; and therefore it is not so good to have the best art for ever under our eyes, though it is abundantly good that we should be able to get at it from time to time.

Meantime, I cannot allow that it is good for any hour of the day to be wholly stripped of life and beauty; therefore we must provide ourselves with lesser (I will not say worse) art with which to surround our common workaday or restful times; & for those times, I think, it will be enough for us to clothe our daily & domestic walls with ornament that reminds us of the outward face of the earth, of the innocent love of animals, or of man passing his days between work and rest as he does. I say, with ornament that reminds us of these things, and sets our minds and memories at work easily creating them; because scientific representation of them would again involve us in the problems of hard fact and the troubles of life, and so once more destroy our rest for us.

If this lesser art will really be enough to content us, it is a good thing; for as to the higher art there never can be very much of it going on, since but few people can be found to do it; also few can find money enough to possess themselves of any portion of it, and, if they could, it would be a piece of preposterous selfishness to shut it up from other

people's eyes; while of the secondary art there ought to be abundance for all men, so much that you need but call in the neighbours, & not all the world, to see your pretty new wall when it is finished.

But this kind of art must be suggestive rather than imitative; because, in order to have plenty of it, it must be a kind of work that is not too difficult for ordinary men with imaginations capable of development; men from whom you cannot expect miracles of skill, and from whose hands you must not ask too much, lest you lose what their intelligence has to give you, by over-wearying them. Withal, the representation of this lower kind of life is pretty sure to become soulless and tiresome unless it have a soul given to it by the efforts of men forced by the limits of order and the necessities of art to think of these things for themselves, and so to give you some part of the infinite variety which abides in the mind of man.

Of course you understand that it is impossible to imitate nature literally; the utmost realism of the most realistic painter falls a long way short of that; and as to the work which must be done by ordinary men, not unskilled or dull to beauty, the attempt to attain to realism would be sure to result in obscuring their intelligence, & in starving you of all the beauty which you desire in your hearts, but which you have not learned to express by means of art.

Let us go back to our wall again, and think of it. If you are to put nothing on it but what strives to be a literal imitation of nature, all you can do is to have a few cut flowers or bits of boughs nailed to it, with perhaps a blue-bottle fly or a butterfly here and there. Well, I don't deny that this may make good decoration now and then, but if all decoration had to take that form I think weariness of it would drive you to a white-washed wall; and at the best it is a very limited view to take of nature.

Is it not better to be reminded, however simply, of the close vine-trellis that keeps out the sun by the Nile side; or of the wild woods & their streams, with the dogs panting beside them; or of the swallows sweeping above the garden boughs toward the house-eaves where their nestlings are, while the sun breaks the clouds on them; or of the many-flowered summer meadows of Picardy? Is not all this better than having to count day after day a few sham-real boughs and flowers, casting sham-real shadows on your walls, with little hint of anything beyond Covent Garden in them?

You may be sure that any decoration is futile, and has fallen into at least the first stage of degradation, when it does not remind you of something beyond itself, of something of which it is but a visible symbol.

Now, to sum up, what we want to clothe our walls with is (1) something that it is possible for us to get; (2) something that is beautiful; (3) something

which will not drive us either into unrest or into callousness; (4) something which reminds us of life beyond itself, and which has the impress of human imagination strong on it; and (5) something which can be done by a great many people without too much difficulty and with pleasure.

These conditions I believe to have been fulfilled by the pattern-designers in all times when art has been healthy, and to have been all more or less violated when art has been unhealthy and unreal. In such evil times beauty has given place to whim, imagination to extravagance, nature to sick nightmare fancies, and finally workmanlike considerate skill, which refuses to allow either the brain or the hand to be over-taxed, which, without sparing labour when necessary, refuses sternly to waste it, has given place to commercial trickery sustained by laborious botching.

Now, I have been speaking of what may be called the moral qualities of the art we are thinking of; let us try, therefore, to shorten their names, and have one last word on them before we deal with the material or technical part.

Ornamental pattern-work, to be raised above the contempt of reasonable men, must possess three qualities: beauty, imagination, and order.

'Tis clear I need not waste many words on the first of these. You will be drawing water with a sieve with a vengeance if you cannot manage to make ornamental work beautiful.

As for the second quality, imagination: the necessity for that may not be so clear to you, considering the humble nature of our art; yet you will probably admit, when you come to think of it, that every work of man which has beauty in it must have some meaning in it also; that the presence of any beauty in a piece of handicraft implies that the mind of the man who made it was more or less excited at the time, was lifted somewhat above the commonplace; that he had something to communicate to his fellows which they did not know or feel before, and which they would never have known or felt if he had not been there to force them to it.

I want you to think of this when you see, as, unfortunately, you are only too likely often to see, some lifeless imitation of a piece of bygone art, & are puzzled to know why it does not satisfy you. The reason is that the imitator has not entered into the soul of the dead artist; nay, has supposed that he had but a hand and no soul, and so has not known what he meant to do. I dwell on this, because it forces on us the conclusion that if we cannot have an ornamental art of our own, we cannot have one at all. Every real work of art, even the humblest, is inimitable. I am most sure that all the heaped-up knowledge of modern science, all the energy of modern commerce, all the depth & spirituality of modern thought, cannot reproduce so much as the handiwork of an ignorant, super-

stitious Berkshire peasant of the fourteenth century; nay, of a wandering Kurdish shepherd, or of a skin-and-bone oppressed Indian ryot. This, I say, I am sure of; and to me the certainty is not depressing, but inspiriting, for it bids us remember that the world has been noteworthy for more than one century and one place, a fact which we are pretty much apt to forget.

Now as to the third of the essential qualities of our art: order. I have to say of it, that without it neither the beauty nor the imagination could be made visible; it is the bond of their life, and as good as creates them, if they are to be of any use to people in general. Let us see, therefore, with what instruments it works, how it brings together the material and spiritual sides of the craft.

I have already said something of the way in which it deals with the materials which nature gives it, & how, as it were, it both builds a wall against vagueness and opens a door therein for imagination to come in by. Now, this is done by means of treatment which is called, as one may say technically, the conventionalizing of nature. That is to say, order invents certain beautiful and natural forms, which, appealing to a reasonable & imaginative person, will remind him not only of the part of nature which, to his mind at least, they represent, but also of much that lies beyond that part. I have already hinted at some reasons for this treatment of natural objects. You can't bring a whole country-

side, or a whole field, into your room, nor even a whole bush; and, moreover, only a very specially skilled craftsman can make any approach to what might pass with us in moments of excitement for an imitation of such-like things. These are limitations which are common to every form of the lesser arts; but, besides these, every material in which household goods are fashioned imposes certain special limitations within which the craftsman must work. Here again, is the wall of order against vagueness, and the door of order for imagination. For you must understand from the first that these limitations are as far as possible from being hindrances to beauty in the several crafts. On the contrary, they are incitements and helps to its attainment; those who find them irksome are not born craftsmen, and the periods of art that try to get rid of them are declining periods.

Now this must be clear to you, if you come to think of it. Give an artist a piece of paper, & say to him, "I want a design," and he must ask you, "What for? What's to be done with it?" And if you can't tell him, well, I dare not venture to mention the name which his irritation will give you. But if you say, I want this queer space filled with ornament, I want you to make such and such a pretty thing out of these intractable materials, straightway his invention will be quickened, and he will set to work with a will; for, indeed, delight in skill lies at the root of all art.

Now, further, this working in materials, which is the raison d'être of all pattern-work, still further limits it in the direct imitation of nature, drives it still more decidedly to appeal to the imagination. For example: you have a heap of little coloured cubes of glass to make your picture of, or you have some coloured thrums of worsted wherewith to build up at once a picture and a piece of cloth; well, there is a wrong & a right way of setting to work about this: if you please you may set to work with your cubes and your thrums to imitate a brush-painted picture, a work of art done in a material wherein the limitations are as few and pliable as they are many and rigid in the one you are working in; with almost invisible squares or shuttle-strokes, you may build up, square by square, or line by line, an imitation of an oil-painter's rapid stroke of the brush, and so at last produce your imitation, which doubtless people will wonder at, & say, "How was it done? we can see neither cubes nor thrums in it." And so also would they have wondered if you had made a portrait of the Lord Mayor in burnt sugar, or of Mr. Parnell in fireworks. But the wonder being over, 'tis like that some reasonable person will say, "This is not specially beautiful; & as to its skill, after all, you have taken a year to do what a second-rate painter could have done in three days. Why have you done it at all?" An unanswerable question, I fear.

Well, such materials may be used thus, so clever

are men; nay, they have been used thus, so perverse and dull are men!

On the other hand, if you will, you may thoroughly consider your glass cubes or your worsted thrums, and think what can best be done with them; but they need not fetter your imagination, for you may, with them, tell a story in a new way, even if it be not a new story; you may conquer the obstinacy of your material and make it obey you as far as the needs of beauty go, and the telling of your tale; you will be pleased with the victory of your skill, but you will not have forgotten your subject amidst mere laboriousness, and you will know that your victory has been no barren one, but has produced a beautiful thing, which nothing but your struggle with difficulties could have brought forth, & when people look at it they will be forced to say: "Well, though it is rough, yet, in spite of the material, the workman has shown that he knows what a good line is; it is beautiful, certainly, after its fashion, and the workman has looked at things with his own eyes: and then how the tesseræ gleam in this indestructible picture, how the gold glitters!" Or, "What wealth of colour and softness of gradation there is in these interwoven thrums of worsted, that have drunk the dye so deeply. No other material conceivable could have done it just like this. And the wages are not so high; we can have plenty of this sort of work. Yes, the man is worth his keep."

In this way, also, your materials can be used, so simple and trustful may men be that they may venture to make a work of art thus: nay, so helpful and joyous have they been, that they have so ventured, for the pleasure of many people, their own not least of all.

Now, I have tried to point out to you that the nature of the craft of pattern-designing imposes certain limitations within which it has to work, and also that each branch of it has further limitations of its own. Before saying a few words that relate to these special limitations, I will, by your leave, narrow our subject by dwelling a little on what is one of the most important parts of pattern-designing: the making of a recurring pattern for a flat surface. Let us first look a little on the construction of these, at the lines on which they are built.

Now, the beauty and imagination which I have spoken of as necessary to all patterns may be, and often have been, of the very simplest kind, & their order the most obvious. So, to begin with, let us take one of these: our wall may be ornamented with mere horizontal stripes of colour; what beauty there may be in these will be limited to the beauty of very simple proportion, and in the tints and contrast of tints used, while the meaning of them will be confined to the calling people's attention to the charm of material, and due orderly construction of a wall.

After this simplest form comes that of chequers

and squares of unfoliated diaper, so to call it, which still is but a hint at the possible construction of the wall, when it is not in itself constructional. From that we get to diapers made by lines, either rectilinear or taking the form of circles touching one another. We have now left the idea of constructional blocks or curves, and are probably suggesting scoring of lines on the surface of the wall joined to inlaying, perhaps; or else there is an idea in it of some sort of hanging; at first, as in much of the ancient Egyptian work, woven of reeds or grass, but later on suggesting weaving of finer materials that do not call attention to the crossing of warp and weft.

This next becomes a floriated diaper. The lines are formed by shapes of stems, & leaves or flowers fill the spaces between the lines. This kind of ornamentation has got a long way from the original stripes and squares, and even from the cross-barred matting diapers. The first of these (when used quite simply) is commonly external work, and is used to enrich further what sunlight and shadow already enrich. The second either implies an early stage of civilization, or a persistent memory of its rudeness.

But as to this more elaborate diaper, simple as its construction is, it has never been superseded: in its richer forms it is intimately connected with the stately and vast shapes of Roman architecture; and until the great change took place, when the

once-despised East began to mingle with the old decaying Western civilization, and even to dominate it, it was really the only form taken by recurring patterns, except mere chequer and scalework, though certain complications of the circle and the square were used to gain greater richness.

Now the next change, so far as mere construction goes, takes us into what is practically the last stage that recurring patterns can get to, and the change is greater than at first sight it may seem to you: it is part of that change in the master-art from late and decaying Classical into Byzantine, or, as I would rather call it, new-born Gothic art. The first places where it is seen are a few buildings of the early part of the sixth century, when architecture seems to have taken a sudden leap, &, in fact, to have passed from death to new birth. As to the construction of patterns the change was simply this: continuous growth of curved lines took the place of mere contiguity, or of the interlacement of straight lines.

All the recurring patterns of the ancient & classical world were, I repeat, founded on the diaper, square or round. All their borders or friezes were formed either by tufts of flowers growing side by side, with their tendrils sometimes touching or interlacing, or by scrolls wherein there was no continuous growth, but only a masking of the repeat by some spreading member of the pattern. But when young Gothic took the place of old Classic, the change

was marked in pattern-designing by the universal acceptance of continuous growth as a necessity of borders and friezes; and in square pattern-work, as I should call it, this growth was the general rule in all the more important designs.

Of this square continuous pattern-work there are two principal forms of construction: (1) The branch formed on a diagonal line, and (2) the net framed on variously-proportioned diamonds. These main constructions were, as time went on, varied in all sorts of ways, more or less beautiful and ingenious; and they are of course only bounding or leading lines, and are to be filled up in all sorts of ways. Nay, sometimes these leading lines are not drawn, and we have left us a sort of powdering in the devices which fill up the spaces between the imaginary lines. Our Sicilian pattern of the thirteenth century gives us an example of this; and this Italian one of the fourteenth century gives us another, the leading lines of the diagonal branch being broken, & so leaving a powdering on those lines; but in all cases the net or branch lines, that is, the simple diagonal or crossing diagonal, are really there.

For clearness' sake, I will run through the different kinds of construction that I have named: (1) Horizontal stripes; (2) block diaper or chequer; (3) matting diaper, very various in form; (4) square line diaper; (5) floriated square diaper; (6) round diaper formed by contiguous circles; (7) the

diagonal branch; (8) the net; (9, which is supplementary) powderings on the lines of the diagonal branch, or of the net.

These are all the elementary forms of construction for a recurring pattern, but of course there may be many varieties of each of them. Elaborate patterns may be wrought on the stripes or chequers; the foliated diaper may be wrought interlocking; the net may be complicated by net within net; the diagonal bough may be crossed variously, or the alternate boughs may be slipped down so as to form a kind of untied and dislocated net; the circles may intersect each other instead of touching, or polygonal figures may be built on them, as in the strange star patterns which are the differentia of Arab art.

Of course, also, these constructional lines may be masked in an infinite number of ways, & in certain periods it was most usual to do this, & much ingenuity was spent, and not a little wasted, in doing it.

Before I pass to the use to which these forms of pattern may be put, I will say a little on the subject of the relief of patterns, which may be considered as the other side of their mechanism. We have, you see, been talking about the skeletons of them, and those skeletons must be clothed with flesh, that is, their members must have tangible superficial area; & by the word relief I understand the method of bringing this out.

Of course this part of the subject is intimately connected with the colour of designs, but of that I shall only say so much as is necessary for dealing with their relief.

To put the matter as shortly as possible, one may say that there are two ways of relief for a recurring surface pattern, either that the figure shall show light upon a dark, or dark upon a light ground; or that the whole pattern, member by member, should be outlined by a line of colour which both serves to relieve it from its ground, which is not necessarily either lighter or darker than the figure, and also prevents the colour from being inharmonious or hard.

Now, to speak broadly, the first of these methods of relief is used by those who are chiefly thinking about form, the second by those whose minds are most set on colour; and you will easily see, if you come to think of it, how widely different the two methods are. Those who have been used to the first method of dark upon light, or light upon dark, often get confused and troubled when they have to deal with many colours, and wonder why it is that, in spite of all their attempts at refinement of colour, their designs still look wrong. The fact is, that when you have many colours, when you are making up your design by contrast of hues & variety of shades, you must use the bounding line to some extent, if not through and through.

Of these two methods of relief, you must think of

the first as being the relief of one plane from another; in it there is always an idea of at least more than one plane of surface, & often of several planes. The second you must think of as the relief of colour from colour, and designs treated thus both should look, and do look, perfectly flat. Again, to speak broadly, the first method is that of the West, the second that of the East; but of the later & (excuse the "bull") the Gothic East. The idea of plane relieved on plane was always present in all the patterns of the ancient and classical world.

Now, as to the use to be made of these recurring surface patterns, the simpler of them, such as mere stripes & simple diapers, have been, & doubtless will always be, used for external decoration of walls, & also for subsidiary decoration where the scale is large & where historical art plays the chief part. On the other hand, some people may doubt as to what share, if any, the more elaborate forms of pattern work should have in internal wall decoration. True it is that the principle of the continuous line, which led up to all that elaboration, was an invention of the later East, just as the system of relieving colour from colour was; and I believe the two things are closely connected, and sprang from this cause, that these peoples were for various reasons not much driven towards the higher pictorial art, and did not reach any great excellence in it; therefore they felt a need for developing their pattern art to the highest degree possible, till it

became something more than a little-noticed accompaniment to historical art, which was all that it used to be in the ancient or the classical world. Perhaps the fact that the barbarians invented what the elder civilization, the great nurse of the higher arts, despised, may seem to some of you a condemnation of this more elaborate pattern-work; but before you make up your minds to that, I would ask you to remember within what narrow limits that perfection of Greece moved. It seems to me that unless you can have the whole of that severe system of theirs, you will not be bettered by taking to a minor part of it; nor, indeed, do I think that you can have that system now, for it was the servant of a perfection which is no longer attainable. The whole art of the classical ancients, while it was alive and growing, was the art of a society made up of a narrow aristocracy of citizens, waited upon by a large body of slaves, and surrounded by a world of barbarism which was always despised & never noticed till it threatened to overwhelm the self-sufficient aristocracy that called itself the civilized world.

No, I think that the barbarians who invented modern Europe invented also several other things which we, their children, cannot decently disregard, or pass by wrapped up in a cloak of sham classical disguise; and that one of these things, the smallest of them if you will, was this invention of the continuous line that led to elaborate & in-

dependent pattern-work; and I believe that this was one of those things which, once invented, cannot be dropped, but must always remain a part of architecture, like the arch, like the pointed arch. Properly subordinated to architecture on the one hand, & to historic art on the other, it ought yet, I think, to play a great part in the making our houses at once beautiful and restful; an end which is one of the chief reasons for existence of all art.

As to its subordination to the greater arts, all we can say about that is that we should not have too much of it. I don't think there is any danger of its thrusting the more intellectual and historic arts out of their due place; rather, perhaps, it is like to be neglected in comparison with them. But if it makes any advance, as it may do, I can see that counsels of despair may sometimes drive us into excess in the use of surface ornament. I mean that our houses are so base and ugly, and it is so hard to alter this bad condition of life, that people may be driven out of all hope of getting good architecture, and try to forget their troubles in that respect by overdoing their internal decoration. Well, you must not suppose that I object to people making the best of their ugly houses; indeed, you probably know that I personally should be finely landed if they did not. Nevertheless, noble building is the first and best and least selfish of the arts, and unless we can manage to get it somehow, we shall soon have no decoration, or, indeed, art of any kind,

to put into the dog-hutches which we now think good enough for refined and educated people, to say nothing about other buildings lesser and greater.

Now, with your leave, I will go through some of the chief crafts in which surface patterns (and chiefly recurring ones) are used, and try to note some of the limitations which necessity & reason impose on them, and show how those limitations may be made helps, and not hindrances, to those crafts.

Let us take first the humble, but, as things go, useful art of paper-staining. And firstly, you must remember that it is a cheap art, somewhat easily done; elaborate patterns are easy in it; so be careful not to overdo either the elaboration in your paper or the amount of pattern-work in your rooms. I mean, by all means have the prettiest paper you can get, but don't fall in love so much with the cheapness of its prettiness as to have several patterns in one room, or even two, if you will be advised by me. Above all, eschew that bastard imitation of picture, embroidery, or tapestry-work, which, under the name of dado-papers, are so common at present; even when they are well designed, as they often are, they are a mistake. They do not in the least fill the place of patterns of beautiful execution or of beautiful materials, and they weary us of these better things by simulating them. The ease with which the brushwork

of an artist can be, I will not say imitated, but caricatured, in paperhangings, is a snare to this useful manufacture, & has been so from the first. In the printed wares you may have any amount of fine lines & shading by hatching, but you cannot have any colour which has not a definite outline. By disregarding these facts, you lose whatever of special pleasure is to be obtained from linear shading, and by clear relief of light upon dark or dark upon light, and you affront people's reason by trying to get the subtle gradations which the execution of handwork alone can give.

Now, again, as to paperhangings, one may accept as an axiom that, other things being equal, the more mechanical the process, the less direct should be the imitation of natural forms; on the other hand, in these wares which are stretched out flat on the wall, and have no special beauty of execution about them, we may find ourselves driven to do more than we otherwise should in masking the construction of our patterns. It gives us a chance of showing that we are pattern-designers born by accepting this apparent dilemma cheerfully, and setting our wits to work to conquer it. Let me state the difficulty again. In this craft the absence of limitations as to number of colours, and the general ease of the manufacture, is apt to tempt us into a mere twisting of natural forms into lines that may pass for ornamental; to yield to this temptation will almost certainly result in our de-

signing a mere platitude. On the other hand is the temptation to design a pattern as we might do for a piece of woven goods, where the structure is boldly shown, & the members strongly marked; but such a pattern done in a cheap material will be apt to look over-ambitious, and, being stretched out flat on the wall, will lead the eye overmuch to its geometrical lines, and all repose will be lost.

What we have to do to meet this difficulty is to create due paper-stainers' flowers & leaves, forms that are obviously fit for printing with a block; to mask the construction of our pattern enough to prevent people from counting the repeats of our pattern, while we manage to lull their curiosity to trace it out; to be careful to cover our ground equably. If we are successful in these two last things, we shall attain a look of satisfying mystery, which is an essential in all patterned goods, and which in paperhangings must be done by the designer, since, as aforesaid, they fall into no folds, and have no special beauty of material to attract the eye.

Furthermore, we must, if we possibly can, avoid making accidental lines, which are very apt to turn up when a pattern is repeated over a wall. As to such lines, vertical lines are the worst; diagonal ones are pretty bad, and horizontal ones do not so much matter.

As to the colouring of paperhangings, it is much on the same footing as the forms of the design.

The material being commonplace and the manufacture mechanical, the colour should above all things be modest; though there are plenty of pigments which might tempt us into making our colour very bright or even very rich, we shall do well to be specially cautious in their use, and not to attempt brightness unless we are working in a very light key of colour, & if our general tone is bound to be deep, to keep the colour grey. You understand, of course, that no colour should ever be muddy or dingy; to make goods of such sort shows inexperience, & to persist in making them, incapacity. Now, a last word about this craft. Have papers with pretty patterns if you like them, but if you don't, I beg of you, quite seriously, to have nothing to do with them, but whitewash your wall and be done with it. That, I distinctly inform you, is the way, and the only way, that you who do not care about the art can help us manufacturers.

So much for paper-staining. The craft of printing on cloth (generally cotton) we may take next as a kindred art. Yet we don't meet quite the same difficulties here, for it is generally used so that it falls into folds or turns round furniture; so we need not be so anxious about masking the structure of our patterns, or so afraid of accidental lines; & as to the colour, our material is so much more interesting that we may indulge in any brightness we can get out of genuine dyes, which for the rest have always some beauty of their own.

As to the spirit of the designs for this craft, for some reason or other, I imagine because it is so decidedly an Eastern manufacture, it seems to call for specially fantastic forms. A pattern which would make a very good paperhanging would often look dull and uninteresting as a chintz pattern. The naïvest of flowers with which you may do anything that is not ugly; birds and animals, no less naïve, all made up of spots and stripes and flecks of broken colour, these seem the sort of thing we ask for. You cannot well go wrong so long as you avoid commonplace, & keep somewhat on the daylight side of nightmare. Only you must remember that, considering the price of the material it is done on, this craft is a specially troublesome one; so that in designing for it you must take special care that every fresh process you lay upon a poor filmy piece of cotton, worth fourpence or fivepence per yard, should really add beauty to it, and not be done for whim's sake. I really think you would be shocked if you knew how much trouble and anxiety can be thrown away on such trifles: what a stupendous weight of energy & the highest science have been brought to bear upon producing a pattern consisting of three black dots & a pink line, done in some special manner on a piece of cotton cloth. I don't quite know what excuse for this trifling a philosopher might find, but to a craftsman like myself, it seems mere barbarous twaddle, and I beg of you who wish to avoid complicity with it never to buy

a piece of patterned cotton if you don't think the pattern pretty: that's the only way you can help us craftsmen in the matter; that is what I call patronage of art.

Now as to the pattern-designing for figured woven stuffs, which is one of the most important branches of the art. Here, as you will find yourself more limited by special material than in the branches above named, so you will not be so much beset by the dangers of commonplace. You cannot choose but make your flowers weavers' flowers. On the other hand, as the craft is a nobler one than paper-staining or cotton-printing, it claims from us a higher and more dignified style of design. Your forms must be clearer and sharper, your drawing more exquisite, your pattern must have more of meaning and history in it: in a word, your design must be more concentrated than in what we have hitherto been considering; yet again, if you have to risk more, you have some compensation in the fact that you will not be hampered by any necessity for masking the construction of your pattern, both because your stuff is pretty sure to be used falling into folds, & will be wrought in some material that is beautiful in itself, more or less; so that there will be a play of light and shade on it, which will give subordinate incident, & minimize the risk of hardness. Moreover, these last facts about woven stuffs call on you to design in a bolder fashion and on a larger scale than for stiffer & duller-surfaced goods;

so we will say that the special qualities needful for a good design for woven stuff are breadth & boldness, ingenuity and closeness of invention, clear definite detail joined to intricacy of parts, &, finally, a distinct appeal to the imagination by skilful suggestion of delightful pieces of nature.

In saying this about woven stuffs I have been thinking of goods woven by the shuttle in the common looms, which produce recurring patterns; there are, however, two forms of the weaver's craft which are outside these, and on which I will say a few words: first, the art of tapestry weaving, in which the subjects are so elaborate that, of necessity, it has thrown aside all mechanical aid, and is wrought by the most primitive process of weaving, its loom being a tool rather than a machine. Under these circumstances it would be somewhat of a waste of labour to weave recurring patterns in it, though in less mechanical times it has been done. I have said that you could scarcely bring a whole bush into a room for your wall decoration, but since in this case the mechanical imitations are so few, and the colour obtainable in its materials is so deep, rich, & varied, as to be unattainable by anything else than the hand of a good painter in a finished picture, you really may almost turn your wall into a rose hedge or a deep forest, for its material and general capabilities almost compel us to fashion plane above plane of rich, crisp, and varying foliage with bright blossoms, or strange

birds showing through the intervals. However, such designs as this must be looked upon as a sort of halting-place on the way to historical art, and may be so infinitely varied that we have not time to dwell upon it.

The second of these offshoots of the weaver's craft is the craft of carpet-making; by which I mean the real art, and not the makeshift goods woven purely mechanically. Now this craft, despite its near kinship as to technical matters with tapestry, is very specially a pattern-designer's affair. As to designing for it, I must say it is mighty difficult, because from the nature of it we are bound to make our carpet not only a passable piece of colour, but even an exquisite one, and, at the same time, we must get enough of form and meaning into it to justify our making it at all in these Western parts of the world; since as to the mere colour we are not likely to beat, and may be well pleased if we equal, an ordinary genuine Eastern specimen.

Once more, the necessary limitations of the art will make us, not mar us, if we have courage and skill to face and overcome them. As for a carpet-design, it seems quite clear that it should be quite flat, that it should give no more at least than the merest hint of one plane behind another; & this, I take it, not so much for the obvious reason that we don't feel comfortable in walking over what simulates high relief, but rather because in a carpet we specially desire quality in material & colour:

that is, every little bit of surface must have its own individual beauty of material and colour. Nothing must thrust this necessity out of view in a carpet. Now, if in our coarse, worsted mosaic we make awkward attempts at shading and softening tint into tint, we shall dirty our colour and so degrade our material; our mosaic will look coarse, as it ought never to look; we shall expose our lack of invention, and shall be parties to the making of an expensive piece of goods for no good reason.

Now, the way to get the design flat, & at the same time to make it both refined and effective in colour, in a carpet design, is to follow the second kind of relief I told you of, and to surround all or most of your figure by a line of another tint, and to remember while you are doing it that it is done for this end, and not to make your design look neat and trim. If this is well done, your pieces of colour will look gemlike & beautiful in themselves, your flowers will be due carpet flowers, & the effect of the whole will be soft and pleasing. But I admit that you will probably have to go to the school of the Eastern designers to attain excellence in the art, as this in its perfection is a speciality of theirs.

Now, after all, I am bound to say that when these difficulties are conquered, I, as a Western man & a picture-lover, must still insist on plenty of meaning in your patterns; I must have unmistakable suggestions of gardens & fields, & strange trees, boughs, and tendrils, or I can't do with your pat-

tern, but must take the first piece of nonsense-work a Kurdish shepherd has woven from tradition and memory; all the more, as even in that there will be some hint of past history.

Since carpets are always bordered cloths, this will be a good place for saying a little on the subject of borders, which will apply somewhat to other kinds of wares. You may take it that there are two kinds of border: one that is merely a finish to a cloth, to keep it from looking frayed out, as it were, and which doesn't attract much notice. Such a border will not vary much from the colour of the cloth it bounds, and will have in its construction many of the elements of the construction of the filling-pattern; though it must be strongly marked enough to fix that filling in its place, so to say.

The other kind of border is meant to draw the eye to it more or less, & is sometimes of more importance than the filling: so that it will be markedly different in colour, and as to pattern will rather help out that of the filling by opposing its lines than by running with them. Of these borders, the first, I think, is the fitter when you are using a broad border; the second does best for a narrow one.

All borders should be made up of several members, even where they are narrow, or they will look bald & poor, & ruin the whole cloth. This is very important to remember.

The turning the corner of a border is a difficult

business, and will try your designing skill rudely; but I advise you to face it, and not to stop your border at the corner by a rosette or what not. As a rule, you should make it run on, whereby you will at least earn the praise of trying to do your best.

As to the relative proportion of filling and border: if your filling be important in subject, and your cloth large, especially if it be long, your border is best to be narrow, but bright & sparkling, harder & sharper than the filling, but smaller in its members; if, on the contrary, the filling be broken in colour and small in subject, then have a wide border, important in subject, clear and well defined in drawing, but by no means hard in relief.

Remember on this head, once more, that the bigger your cloth is the narrower in comparison should be your border; a wide border has a most curious tendency towards making the whole cloth look small.

So much very briefly about carpet-designing and weaving in general; and, once more, those of you who don't yet know what a pretty pattern is, and who don't care about a pattern, don't be dragooned by custom into having a pattern because it is a pattern, either on your carpets or your curtains, or even your waistcoats. That's the way that you, at present, can help the art of pattern-designing.

I will finish my incomplete catalogue of the crafts that need the pattern-designer by saying a few

words on designing for embroidery & for pottery-painting.
As to embroidery designing, it stands midway between that for tapestry and that for carpets; but as its technical limits are much less narrow than those of the latter craft, it is very apt to lead people into cheap and commonplace naturalism: now, indeed, it is a delightful idea to cover a piece of linen cloth with roses, and jonquils, and tulips, done quite natural with the needle, and we can't go too far in that direction if we only remember the needs of our material & the nature of our craft in general: these demand that our roses and the like, however unmistakably roses, shall be quaint and naïve to the last degree, & also, since we are using specially beautiful materials, that we shall make the most of them, & not forget that we are gardening with silk and gold-thread; and, lastly, that in an art which may be accused by ill-natured persons of being a superfluity of life, we must be specially careful that it shall be beautiful, & not spare labour to make it sedulously elegant of form, and every part of it refined in line and colour.
In pottery-painting we are more than ever in danger of falling into sham naturalistic platitude, since we have no longer to stamp our designs with a rough wood-block on paper or cotton, nor have we to build up our outlines by laying square by square of colour, but, pencil in hand, may do pretty much what we will. So we must be a law to ourselves,

and when we get a tile or a plate to ornament remember two things: first, the confined space or odd shape we have to work in; & second, the way in which the design has to be executed. As to the first point, if we are not to miss our aim altogether, we must do something ingenious and inventive, something that will at once surprise and please people, which will take hold of their eyes as something new, and force them to look at it. Within these limits we may do as we please, so long as we do not forget, in the next place, that our design has to be pencilled by an instrument difficult to use, but delightful to handle when the difficulty is overcome, a long, sharp-pointed brush charged with heavy colour, which pencilling should be done with a firm, deliberate, & decided, but speedy hand.

I feel the more bound to insist on this in pottery-painting because of late a kind of caricature art has been going about in the shape of elaborately painted dishes of the most disastrous design and execution. Most often the designers of these have thought they have done all they need when they have drawn a bunch of flowers or a spray without any attempt at arrangement, and coloured it in imitation of a coarse daub in oils, without the least thought of what pigments were within reach of the pottery-painter. Such things teach nothing but the art of how not to do it.

Now, once more, those of you who are unconscious

that there is any beauty in a pattern painted on pottery can at least help the art by utterly refusing to have any pattern on it; & I beg them earnestly and sincerely to take that amount of trouble.

You may think that I have been wandering from my point in saying so much about the various crafts for which designs have to be made, rather than treating of the designs in general; but I have not done so by accident, at any rate, but because I want you to understand that I think it of capital importance that a pattern-designer should know all about the craft for which he has to draw. Neither will knowledge only suffice him; he must have full sympathy with the craft and love it, or he can never do honour to the special material he is designing for. Without this knowledge & sympathy the cleverest of men will do nothing but provide platitudes for the public and wanton puzzles for those who execute the work to break their hearts over.

Perhaps a few words on pattern-designing generally may be of some use to some of you, though the chances are you will have heard the same thing said often enough before.

Above all things, avoid vagueness; run any risk of failure rather than involve yourselves in a tangle of poor weak lines that people can't make out. Definite form bounded by firm outline is a necessity for all ornament. If you have any inclination towards that shorthand of picture-painters, which

they use when they are in a hurry, & which people call sketching, give up pattern-designing, for you have no turn for it. I repeat, do not be afraid of your design or try to muddle it up so that people can scarce see it; if it is arranged on good lines, and its details are beautiful, you need not fear its looking hard so long as it covers the ground well, & is not wrong in colour.

Rational growth is necessary to all patterns, or at least the hint of such growth; & in recurring patterns, at least, the noblest are those where one thing grows visibly and necessarily from another. Take heed in this growth that each member of it be strong and crisp, that the lines do not get thready or flabby or too far from their stock to sprout firmly and vigorously; even where a line ends it should look as if it had plenty of capacity for more growth if so it would.

Again, as to dealing with nature. To take a natural spray of what not and torture it into certain lines, is a hopeless way of designing a pattern. In all good pattern-designs the idea comes first, as in all other designs, e.g., a man says, I will make a pattern which I will mean to give people an idea of a rose-hedge with the sun through it; and he sees it in such and such a way; then, and not till then, he sets to work to draw his flowers, his leaves and thorns, and so forth, and so carries out his idea.

In choosing natural forms be rather shy of certain very obviously decorative ones, e.g., bind-weed,

passion-flower, and the poorer forms of ivy, used without the natural copiousness. I should call these trouble-savers, and warn you of them, unless you are going to take an extra amount of trouble over them. We have had them used so cheaply this long while that we are sick of them.

On the other hand, outlandishness is a snare. I have said that it was good and reasonable to ask for obviously natural flowers in embroidery; one might have said the same about all ornamental work, and further, that those natural forms which are at once most familiar and most delightful to us, as well from association as from beauty, are the best for our purpose. The rose, the lily, the tulip, the oak, the vine, and all the herbs and trees that even we cockneys know about, they will serve our turn better than queer, outlandish, upside-down-looking growths. If we cannot be original with these simple things, we shan't help ourselves out by the uncouth ones.

A very few words as to style. Most true it is that if all art ought to belong specially to its time and nation, this should be, above all, the case with such a comparatively easy art as pattern-designing. Yet I am not so simple as to suppose that we can suddenly build up a style out of the wreck of inanity into which we had fallen a little while ago, without any help from the ages of art. And though I would say loudly, Don't copy any style at all, but make your own; yet you must study the history

of your art, or you will be nose-led by the first bad copyist of it that you come across. Well, my advice to you in this matter is very simple. Study any or all of the styles that have real growth in them, and as for the others, don't do more than give a passing glance at them, for they can do you no good. From the days of ancient Egypt to the time of the sickness of mediæval art the architectural arts had life & growth in them: study all that as much as you please; but, from the times of the Renaissance onwards, life, growth, and hope are gone from these, and as matters of study you have nothing to do with them. The architectural art that was in use even at the time of the great masters of the Renaissance will mislead you if you try to found any style of pattern-designing upon it, and this in spite of many splendid qualities in itself. It is not the art of hope, but of decay. As to what followed it, and culminated in the bundle of degraded whims falsely called a style, that so fitly expresses the corruption of the days of Louis XV., you need not even look at that in passing. More noble failures will serve your turn better, even for warnings.

If I am speaking to any pattern-designers here, or to those that have any influence over their lives, I should like to remind them of one thing, that the constant designing of recurring patterns is a very harassing business, and should always be supplemented with some distinctly executive work.

Those who in the present unhappy state of the arts do not design for work which they carry out themselves should relieve their brain by drawing from the human figure, from flowers or landscapes or old pictures, or some such things; by doing something which is not a diagram, but is an end in itself, or they will either suffer terribly or become quite stupid. A friend of mine, who is a Manchester calico-printer, told me the other day that the shifty and clever designers who draw the thousand & one ingenious & sometimes pretty patterns for garment goods which Manchester buys of Paris, have a great tendency to go mad, and often do so; and I cannot wonder at it.

That such a caution as this should be necessary is a woful commentary on the state of those arts on which pattern-designing lives. That the art, whose office it was to give rest and pleasure to the toiling hand should now have become a torment to the wearied brain of man, is a strange inversion of the natural order of things, &, to my mind, points to matters far more serious than would at first sight seem to be wrapped up in the question of designing pretty patterns for our common household goods.

I must ask your patience for a few minutes yet while I say a word or two on these matters, for I have made a compact with myself that I will never address my countrymen on the subject of art without speaking as briefly, but also as plainly as I can,

on the degradation of labour which I believe to be the great danger of civilization, as it has certainly proved itself to be the very bane of art.

Foresight and goodwill have set on foot many schemes for educating people before they come to working years: for tending them when misfortune or sickness prevents them from working, for amusing them reasonably when they are at leisure from their work: aims that are all good and some necessary to the well-being of our race.

But can they alone touch the heart of the matter, to be sedulous about what people do with their time till they are growing out of childhood into youth, to take pains to add to the pleasure of their few hours of rest, & at the same time never to give a thought to the way in which they spend their working hours (ten hours a day, & a long time it is to spend in wishing we were come to the end of it) between the ages of thirteen and seventy? This, I say, does seem to me a strange shutting of the eyes to one of the main difficulties of life, a strange turning from the great question which all well-wishers to their neighbours ought to ask: how can men gain hope and pleasure in their daily work?

I do not profess to foretell what will happen to the world if we persist in keeping our eyes shut on this point; but one thing I know will happen: the extinction of all art. I say I know it will happen, & indeed it is happening now, and unless we take

the other turn before long it will soon be all done. You would not believe me if I professed to think that a light matter even by itself: the thrusting out of all beauty from the life of man; but when one knows what lies at the bottom of it, how much heavier it seems, the thrusting out of all pleasure and self-respect from man's daily work, the helplessly letting that daily work become a mere blind instrument for the over-peopling of the world, for the ceaseless multiplication of causeless and miserable lives.

Surely I am speaking to some whose lives, like mine, are blessed with pleasurable & honourable work, who cannot bear the thought that we are to go on shutting our eyes to this, and to do nothing because our time on earth is not long. Can we not face the evil and do our best to amend it our very selves? If it be a necessary evil, let us at least do our share of proving that it is so by withstanding it to the utmost. The worst that can happen to us rebels in that case is to be swept away before the flood of that necessity, which will happen to us no less if we do not struggle against it: if we are flunkies, not rebels. Indeed, you may think that the metaphor is all too true, and that we are but mere straws in that resistless flood. But don't let us strain a metaphor; for we are no straws, but men, with each one of us a will and aspirations, and with duties to fulfil; so let us see after all what we can do to prove whether it be necessary that art should perish: that

is, whether men should live in an ugly world, with no work to do in it but wearisome work.
Well, first we must be conscious of the evil, as I believe some are, who do not dare to acknowledge it. And next we must dare to acknowledge it, as some do who dare not act further in the matter.
And next: why, a good deal next, though it may be put into few words, for steady rebellion is a heavyish matter to take in hand; & I tell you that every one who loves art in these days & dares pursue it to the uttermost is a dangerous rebel enough; and I will finish by speaking of one or two things that we must do to fit ourselves for our troublous life of rebellion.
We ought to get to understand the value of intelligent work, the work of men's hands guided by their brains, and to take that, though it be rough, rather than the unintelligent work of machines or slaves, though it be delicate; to refuse altogether to use machine-made work unless where the nature of the thing made compels it, or where the machine does what mere human suffering would otherwise have to do: to have a high standard of excellence in wares and not to accept makeshifts for the real thing, but rather to go without; to have no ornament merely for fashion's sake, but only because we really think it beautiful, otherwise to go without it; not to live in an ugly and squalid place (such as London) for the sake of mere excitement or the like, but only because our

duties bind us to it; to treat the natural beauty of the earth as a holy thing not to be rashly dealt with for any consideration; to treat with the utmost care whatever of architecture and the like is left us of the times of art. I deny that it can ever be our own to do as we like with; it is the property of the world, that we hold in trust for those that come after us.

Here is a set of things not easy to do (as it seems), which I believe to be the duty of all men taking some trouble in the art of life, & not giving in to the barbarous and cumbrous luxury, or comfort as you may please to call it, which some of us are so proud of as a mark of our civilization, but which I sometimes think is really fated to stifle all art, and in the long run all intelligence, unless we grow wise in time and look to it.

I dare say that nobody but men who consciously or unconsciously care about art would think of binding themselves by these rules, but perhaps some others may join them in trying to act on these that follow. To have as little as possible to do with middlemen, but to bring together the makers and the buyers of goods as closely as possible. To do our best to further the independence and reasonable leisure of all handicraftsmen. To eschew all bargains, real or imaginary (they are mostly the latter), and to be anxious to pay and to get what a piece of goods is really worth. To that end to try to understand the difference between good & bad

in wares, which will also give us an insight into the craftsman's troubles, and will tend to do away with an ignorant impatience & ill-temper which is much too common in our dealings with them nowadays.

In short, as I have said before that we must strive against barbarous luxury, so here I must say that we must strive against barbarous waste. What we have to do is to try to put co-operation in the place of competition in the dealings of men; that is, in place of commercial war, with all the waste & injustice of war, which, since men are foolish rather than malicious, has to be softened ever and anon by weak compliance & contemptuous good-nature, we must strive to put commercial peace with justice and thrift beside it.

I ask you not to think that I have been wandering from my point in saying all this: I have had to talk to you to-night about popular art, the foundation on which all art stands. I could not go through the dreary task of speaking to you of a phantom of bygone times, of a thing with no life in it; I must speak of a living thing with hope in it, or hold my peace; and most deeply am I convinced that popular art cannot live if labour is to be for ever the thrall of muddle, dishonesty, and disunion. Cheerfully I admit that I see signs about us of a coming time of order, goodwill, and union, and it is that which has given me the courage to say to you these few last words, & to hint to you what in my poor judg-

ment we each and all of us who have the cause at heart may do to further the cause.

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